



If anyone cares to look up the Patriarch in Lloyd's List it will be discovered that the owner of her was T. Tyser, but it matters very little whether she was built of heavier plating than the rules required, or whether she was cemented or built under special survey or what not. For T. Tyser, otherwise Mr. Thomas Tyser, was not only the owner of the Patriarch, but also the owner of a dozen other vessels all beginning with a "P." He was, moreover, the owner of a large block of land in the heart of Melbourne; he had several streets, of which the biggest was Tyser Street, S.E., in London, and his banking account was certainly of heavier metal than he had any personal use for. He was a rough dog from the north country, and in the course of half a century's fight in London he came out top dog in his own line and was more or less of a millionaire.

"And he's my uncle," said Georgie Potts; "his sister was my mother, and here I am before the stick in one of his old wind-jammers and gettin' two-punten in this here Patriarch of his, and hang me if I believe the old bloke has another relation in the world. It's hard lines, mates—it's hard lines. Don't you allow it's hard lines?"

It was Sunday morning in the southeast trades, and every sail was drawing "like a bally doring-master," as Georgie once said, and the "crowd" of the Patriarch were all fairly easy in their minds and ready for a discussion.

"If so be you are 'is nervy, as you state," said the port watch, cautiously, "we allow it's hard lines."

"I've stated it frequent," said Georgie, "and it's the truth, the whole truth, and nothin' but it, so help me. D'ye think I'd claim to be old Tyser's sister's son if I wasn't? I'd soon to claim it."

"Any man would soon to be Tyser's sister's son," said the starboard watch. "He'd soon to be 'im unless he was, for Tyser's a mean old dog, ain't he, Georgie?"

Georgie thanked his watch-mates for backing him up so.

"That's right, chaps. There's no mean in the north of England—or the south, for that matter—and the way this ship's found is scandalous."

"The grub's horrid," said both watches.

"And look at the gear," said Georgie; "everything ready to part a deal easier than my uncle is. I never lays hold of a halliard but I'm thinking I'll go on a back if I pulls heavy. Oh, it's a fair scandal!"

He considered the scandal soberly and with some sadness.

"He might leave you some dubs, Georgie," suggested his mate, Jack Braby. "He might, after all."

"Not a solitary dime," said Georgie. "Him and me quarrelled because my father fought him in the street, and I hit the old hunk with a bit of a brick because he got my dad down."

"Was that the row about?" asked the others, eagerly.

"Nothin' to speak of," said Georgie. "My old man said he was a bloodsucker, and that led to words. And I never hurt him to speak of. And yet I've shipped in one of his ships, and am as poor as he's rich. He allowed none of us would get a farthing; he shouted it out in the market-place and said hospitals would get it, because one of his skippers that he'd sacked cut him up awful with a staysail hank, and they sewed him very neat at one of 'em."

"There's nothin' so good in a fight as a staysail hank," said Jack Braby, contemptuously. "I cut a policeman all to rags wiv one once."

"Was that the time you done three months' ard?" asked the port watch. "Six," said Braby, proudly; "and I told the beak I could do it on my 'ead. But, Georgie, if you was owner yourself what would you do?"

"Yes, wot?" asked the rest. Georgie shook his head and sighed. "I'd make my ships such that sailormen would be wantin' to pay to go in 'em," said Georgie. "I've laid awake thinkin' of it."

"Oh, tell us," said all hands, with as much unanimity as if they were talling on to the halliards under the stimulus of "Give us some time to blow the man down." "Tell us, Georgie."

"I'd be friends with all my men, for one thing," said Georgie, "and I'd not have a single Dutchman in a ship of mine."

The three "Dutchmen" on board one of whom was a Swede, another a German, and the third a Finn, shifted uneasily on their chests, but said nothing. "And not a Dago," continued the "owner," "and I'd give double wages and grog three times a day and tobacco thrown in. And the cook shouldn't be a hash-spoller, but what Frenchies call a chef."

"We never heard of that. How d'ye spell it, Georgie?"

"S-H-E-double F," said Georgie; "and it means a man that is known not to spoil vittles, as most sea-cooks does, by the very look of him. And when it was wet or cold the galley fire should be alight all night. And the skipper and the mates should be told by me, and told very stern, that if they valled their billets a continental they'd be have like gents and not cuss too much. And there shouldn't be no 'working up,' and any officer of mine that was dead on 'dry pulls' on the halliards should have the jack quick. And every time a ship of mine came into dock I'd be there, and I'd see what the crowd's opinion was of the skipper and the mates. Oh, I'd make my ship a Paradise, I would!"

Most of the men nodded approval, but Braby wasn't quite satisfied. "And would there be grog every time of shortenin' sail, Georgie?"

"Oh, of course," said Georgie, "and every time you made sail too."

But an old seaman shook his head. "Tis mighty fine, mates, to 'ear Georgie guff as to what 'e'd do," he growled, "but I ain't young and I've seed men get rich, and they wasn't in the least what they allowed they'd be. Georgie 'ere is one of 'us now, and 'e feels where the shoe pinches; but if so be 'e got rotten with money 'e'd be for calling sailormen swine as like as not. And 'e'd wear a topper."

"You're a liar; I wouldn't!" roared Georgie.

"Maybe I am a liar," said the old chap. "I've seen what I've looked at. If you was to learn as your uncle was dead now, you'd go aft and set about on the poop and see his doin' pulley-hauler, with a seegar in your teeth. Riches spoils a man, and it can't be helped; it 'as to, somehow. I've no fault to find with you now, Georgie Potts; for so young a man you're a good seaman and a good shipmate (though you 'ave called me a liar), but you take my word for it, money would make an 'og of you."

And here was a matter for high debate which lasted all through the trades, through the horse latitudes, and into the region of the brave west winds till the Patriarch had made more than half her casting.

"So I'm to be a mean swab and a real swine when I'm rich," said Georgie. "Oh, well, have it your own way. There's times some of you makes me feel I'd like to make you sit up."

"Ear, ear," said the old fo'c'sle man; "there's the very 'aughty richness workin' in his mind, shipmates. What'll the real thing do if 'is huncle pegs out sudden?"

It was curious to note that a certain subdued hostility rose up between most of the men and Georgie. They sat apart and discussed him. Even Jack Braby threw out dark and melancholy hints that they wouldn't be chums any more if old Tyser's money came to his nephew.

There were at times faint suggestions that Georgie was getting touched with his possible prosperity.

"I'll live ashore and have a public-house," said Georgie Potts. And they picked up Cape Otway light in due time, and ran through Port Phillip Heads by-and-by, and came to an anchor off Sandridge. Presently they berthed alongside the pier and began to discharge their cargo; and one hot day went by like another, till they were empty and began to fill up again with wool. In six weeks they were almost ready for sea once more.

And the very night before they hauled out from their berth and lay at anchor in the bay, Georgie went ashore at six o'clock "all by his lonesome," as he and Jack Braby had fought over the job which Braby was to get from his mate when old Tyser died intestate. And as he got to the end of the pier he met a young clerk from the agent's office who knew him by sight.

"I say, I'm in a great hurry," said the boy; "my girl's waiting for me. Will you take these letters to Captain Smith, or I'll miss my train back? I'll give you a bob."

"Righto!" said Georgie; and he pouched the shilling and the letters, and the young fellow ran for his train.

"The letters can wait," said Georgie Potts, "but the bob can't, and I've five more besides. Jack might have had his whack out of it if he hadn't wanted to be my manager when he ain't fit for it."

He put the letters into his pocket and made his way to the Sandridge

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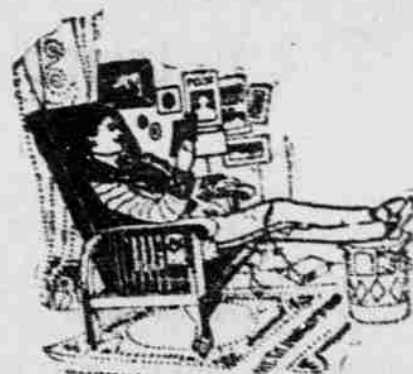
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"If you don't want to work, Mr. Potts, I daresay we can get on without your services," he said.

Arms, where he sat and drank by himself. It was seven o'clock, and he was by then tolerably "full," before it occurred to him to see if he still had the letters. He took them out, and the very first his eyes lighted on was one in a long envelope addressed to

"GEORGE POTTS, ESQ., c/o Captain Smith, PATRIARCH."

"Jerush," said Georgie, "this can't be me! 'Esq.' is what they puts after names of sents. Even the skipper don't have it after his."

He fingered the long envelope and took another drink to consider the matter on.

"Snakes! it must be me," he said, as he drew confidence out of his glass; "there's no other Potts but me."

He was overfull by now, and he opened the letter and began to read it:—"My Dear Sir—"

"By all that's living," said Georgie, "me 'my dear sir!'"

He went on reading:—"My Dear Sir,—We regret to inform you of the sudden death of your uncle, Mr. Thomas Tyser, on the 10th instant. He left no will, and you, as the next of kin and heir-in-law, are entitled to all his real and personal estate, which is, as you are doubtless aware, very large. According to our present estimate it will amount to at least half a million sterling, and as we have been his legal advisers for the last twenty years and know all his affairs we can assure you that with proper management of certain undertakings at present in our hands, it may be much more than our estimate. In order that you may return at once we enclose you a draft on the Union Bank of Australia for two hundred pounds, and have instructed Captain Smith to give you your discharge, which he will, of course, do at once."

"We hope, as we have been so long in the confidence of Mr. Tyser, that you will see no reason to complain of our

tug-boat far astern. And presently the second mate, Mr. Brose, who was a very rough sort of dog, and had sweated his way up to his present exalted rank from that of a foremast hand, hauled Georgie out by the collar of his coat, and had him brought to by means of a bucketful of nice Pass's Straits water. Georgie gasped like a dying dolphin, but came to rapidly.

"I'll teach you to get drunk, you swab," said Brose. "Take them wet things off and turn to."

And Georgie obeyed like a child in the presence of force majeure.

"Oh, I've got a head," he told his mates, "and it seems to me that I had a most extraordinary dream."

"Wot did you dream of, old Cockly-wax?" asked Braby; "did you dream you'd come in for old Tyser's money?"

And Georgie gasped. "Shelp me," he murmured. "Shelp me, did I dream?"

He dropped his marline-spike, as if it were red hot and made a break for the fo'c'sle and his wet coat.

"Now if so be I dreamed," he said, "there'll be naught in this pocket. And if I didn't, I'm figgered."

He put his hand in and brought out a handful of damp and crushed letters, and came out upon deck staggering. Mr. Brose saw him, and was on his tracks like a fish-hawk on a heron-gull. Georgie saw him coming and stood open-mouthed.

"Oh, sir," said Georgie. "Oh, sir—" "Oh, sir," said Brose; "what's your little shenanakin game? Get to work, or I'll have you soused till you're half dead."

But Georgie could explain nothing. "Oh, sir," he stammered, and held up his papers, shaking them feebly. And Brose shook him, anything but feebly, so that Georgie's teeth chattered.

"If you please, sir," he cried out at last, "if you please, sir, don't. I owns her."

"You owns wot?" demanded Brose; and the rest of the men edged as near as they dared.

"He's drunk still," said Braby, as Brose shook his mate once more. "I owns the bally Patriarch," screamed Georgie, "and all the rest of 'em, and all my uncle's richness, and I won't be shook, I won't!"

And Brose let him go. "You're mad," said Brose, "you're mad."

"I ain't," roared Georgie, who was fast recovering from the shock. "I ain't. Take these; read 'em—read 'em out; let the skipper read 'em. I owns the Patriarch and the Palermo and the Proavian and the whole line. The lawyer says so!"

He put the lot of damp letters into Mr. Brose's hands and sat down on the spare top-mast lashed under the rail.

"There's letters for the captain 'ere," said Brose, suspiciously; "ow did you get 'em?"

"Twas a youngster from the office give 'em me," replied Georgie, "and I took a drink first, and there was one for me, and it said so—said I was the owner, said it plain."

And when Brose had read the opened letter he gasped too and went aft to see the skipper. The rest of the watch gathered round Georgie and spoke in awe-struck whispers.

"Is it true, Georgie?" "Gospel," said Georgie. "It's swore to. They sends me two hundred quid in a paper."

"Show us," said the starboard line, "show us."

"Tis in the paper the second has," said Georgie. "It's wrote, 'Pay George Potts, Esq., two hundred quid on the nail.'"

"I'd never 'ave let the second 'ave it," said Braby. "Like as not 'e'll keep it."

"Then I'll sack him," said Georgie, firmly. "Let him dare try to keep it, and I'll sack him and not pay him no wages."

"This is a very strange game, this is," said Braby. "I never 'eard tell of the likes. Did they put 'Esk' on your letter?"

(Continued on page 6.)



"Brose shook his mate once more."

"I'm afraid there's some mistake, Mr. Potts."